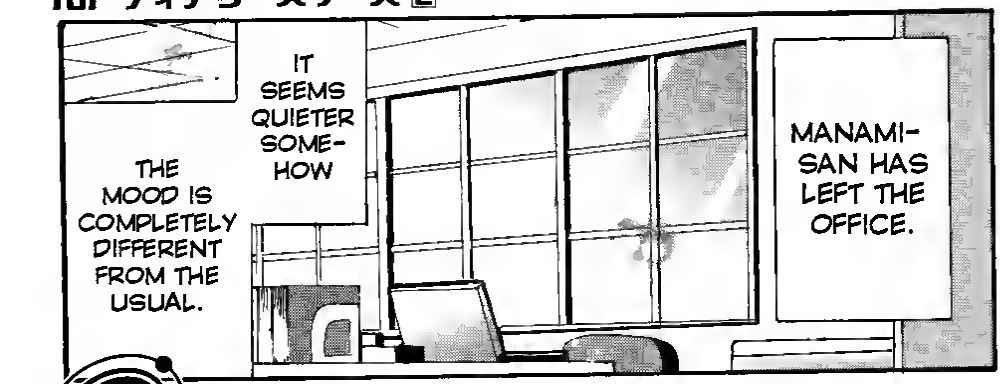
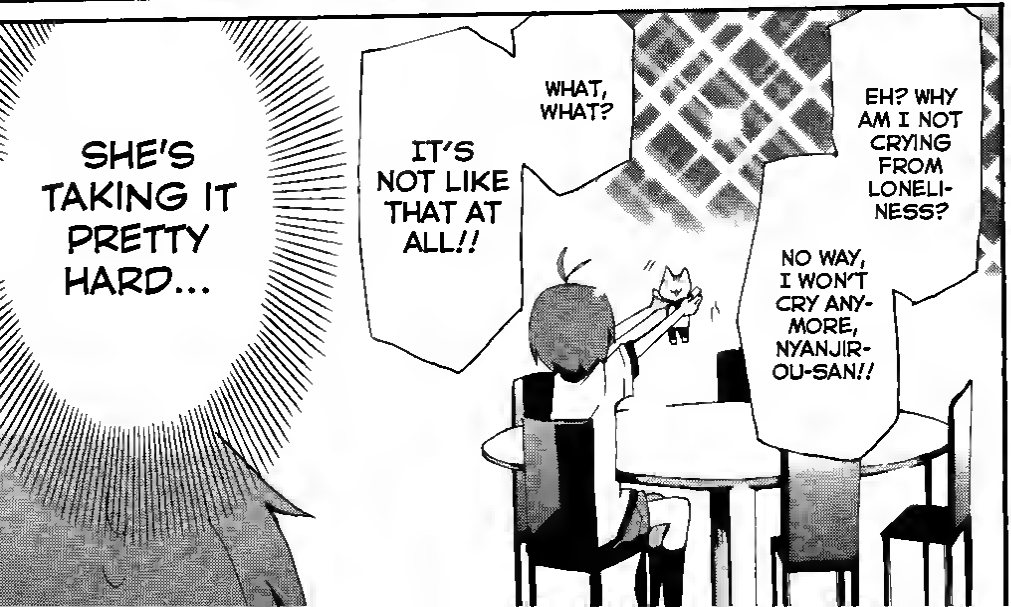

MANAMI-SAN HAS LEFT THE OFFICE.
IT SEEMS QUIETER SOME-HOW
THE MOOD IS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM THE USUAL.

STEP 12

BUT YOU KNOW, YOU KNOW! I DON'T MISS HER AT ALL!
?
キィ...
BECAUSE I'M GOING TO DO MY BEST EVEN WITHOUT MANAMI-SAN!!
THERE'S NO REASON TO BE DIS-COURAGED RIGHT NOW!!


EH? WHY AM I NOT CRYING FROM LONELI-NESS?
WHAT, WHAT?
IT'S NOT LIKE THAT AT ALL!!
NO WAY, I WON'T CRY ANY-MORE, NYANJIR-OU-SAN!!
SHE'S TAKING IT PRETTY HARD...

STEP 12

The New Rival

AI-CHAN! WHAT'S UP?
HYU! RYOU-SAN, WHEN DID YOU GET HERE!?
DON'T YOU HAVE AN AUDITION TODAY!?
THE AUDITION TODAY WAS DECLINED...
EH!?
DECLINED!? WHY IS THAT!?
BECAUSE WITH MY CURRENT ABILITY, THERE'S NO POINT TO AN ENTRY AGAINST THAT COMPETITION...
THE PRESIDENT DECIDED YESTERDAY TO TAKE CARE OF THE WITHDRAWAL..
I WANT TO GO, BUT "IT'S IMPOSSIBLE NOW," SO...
EEEH, IT'S STRANGE FOR THE PRESIDENT TO WITHDRAW SO EASILY,
YEAH... IT'S WORRISOME WHEN YOU CAN'T EVEN TRY TO COMPETE WITH SOMEONE
!
IT SOUNDS LIKE YOUR PHONE IS RINGING, AI-CHAN
OH!?

IT'S MAIL FROM YUKIHO-SEMPAI!?
GOOD JOB AT THE AUDITION THE OTHER DAY, AI-CHAN.
CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR TOTAL VICTORY.
WITH YOUR SONG AND DANCE IT WAS AS IF I COULD SEE INTO YOUR HEART.
DID YOU ACHIEVE ALL THAT ON THE DAY YOUR MANAGER QUIT? WASN'T IT HARD?
I WANT TO TALK MORE THAN I CAN SAY THROUGH EMAIL,
SO IF YOU CAN COME THIS SUNDAY...

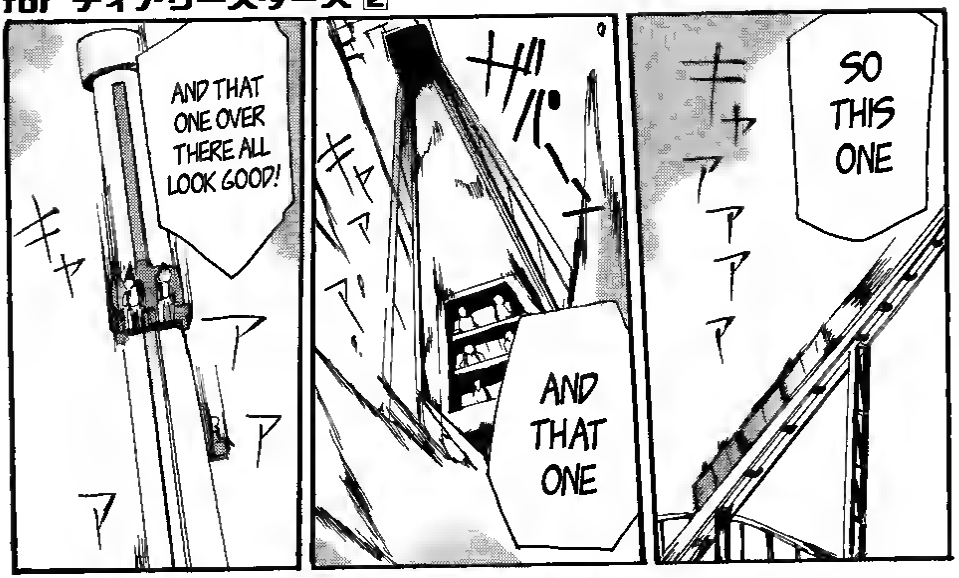
DO YOU WANT TO GO TO THE AMUSEMENT PARK TOGETHER?
WAH-!!!
WE'RE HERE-!!!
AMAZING!! SO BIG!! SO MUCH STUFF!!
FUFU, IS THIS YOUR FIRST TIME COMING HERE, AI-CHAN?
NO NO.
I ONLY CAME ONCE A LONG TIME AGO SO I WAS EXCITED TO COME AGAIN!!
THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR INVITING ME!!
YOU'RE VERY WELCOME.
I'M GLAD I CAME, TOO...

AI-CHAN, STOP!!!
ポカ
ポカポカ
ポカ
IT'S NYAN-JIROU!! IT'S NYANJIROU!!

AH, GOOD POINT!!
SINCE WE'RE HERE WHY DON'T WE SEE MORE OF THE ATTRACTIONS?

I GOT IT! THEN IN THAT CASE, ANYTHING BUT THAT...
パラ

YEAH... I GET MOTION SICKNESS WHEN THEY GO THROUGH THE LOOPS.
YUKIHO-SAN, ARE YOU BAD WITH MOTOR RIDES?


AND THAT ONE OVER THERE ALL LOOK GOOD!
キャ
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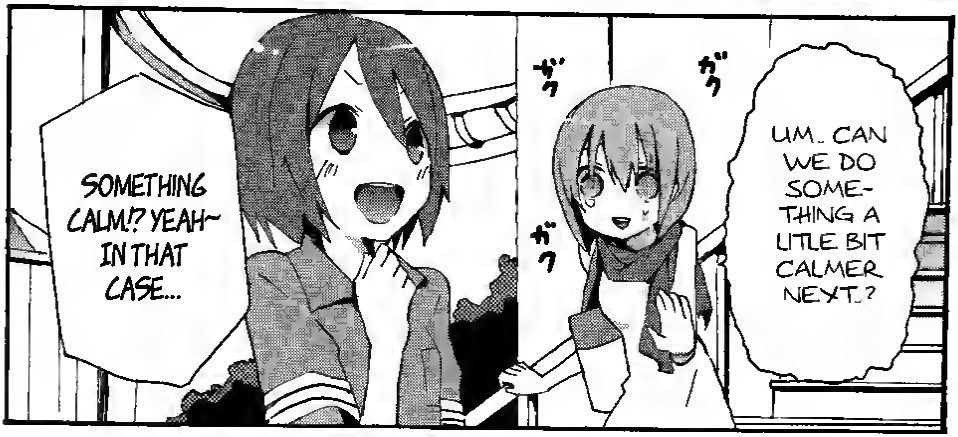
AND THAT ONE
キャアアア!
SO THIS ONE
キャアアアア

HEE EEE!?
TODAY WE'RE GOING TO ENJOY THIS PARK TO THE FULLEST!!

AHAHA-HAHA!!
KYA- PLEASE STOP!!!

HAH- SO MUCH FUN!!
SO REFRESH- ING!!
IT WAS FAST, WASN'T IT YUKIHO- SEMPAI!
Y..YES.. IT WAS KIND OF SUR- PRISING


UM.. CAN WE DO SOME- THING A LITLE BIT CALMER NEXT..?
SOMETHING CALM!? YEAH~ IN THAT CASE...

IT HAS TO BE THAT!!
Haunted House

UUUU, PLEASE DON'T I DON'T LIKE THE DARK
IT'S FINE! NOTHING IS GOING TO JUMP OUT OF THE DARKNESS!
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS WALK THROUGH THE BUILDING, C'MON!
AI-CH TH THIS IS..?
REALLY!? ARE YOU SURE NOTH-ING IS GOING TO JUMP OUT?
YEP!! FOR NOW THERE'S NOTHING TO BE SCARED OF.

カショーン
ONLY THE FUNNY OJII-CHAN THAT'S BEEN FOLLOWING US FOR A WHILE.
カショーン
AH, YUKIHO-SEMPAI!!?
NOOO OO!!
!!?
!?

Aah..
S...Save
me...
KYAAAA!
ア
A
AI-CHAN
GH GHOS-
TS
ARE
YOU OKAY
YUKIHO-
SEMPAI!?
PLEASE
WAIT
SEMPAI!!
NOOOO
OOO
ゴゴゴ
!!
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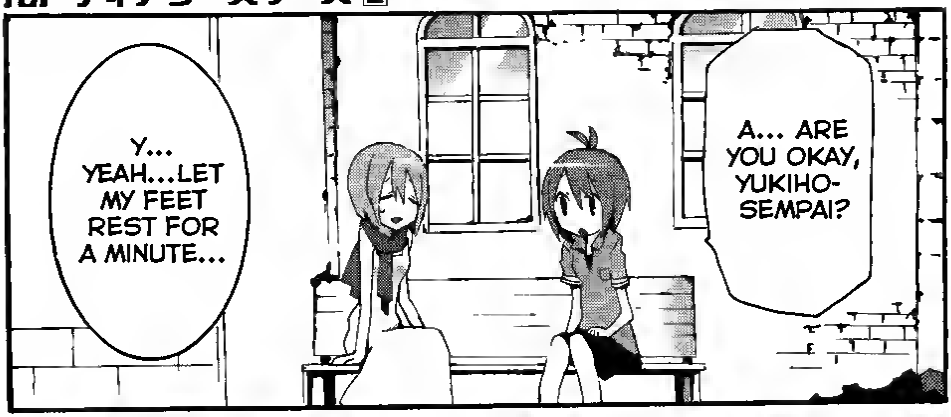
ドサ

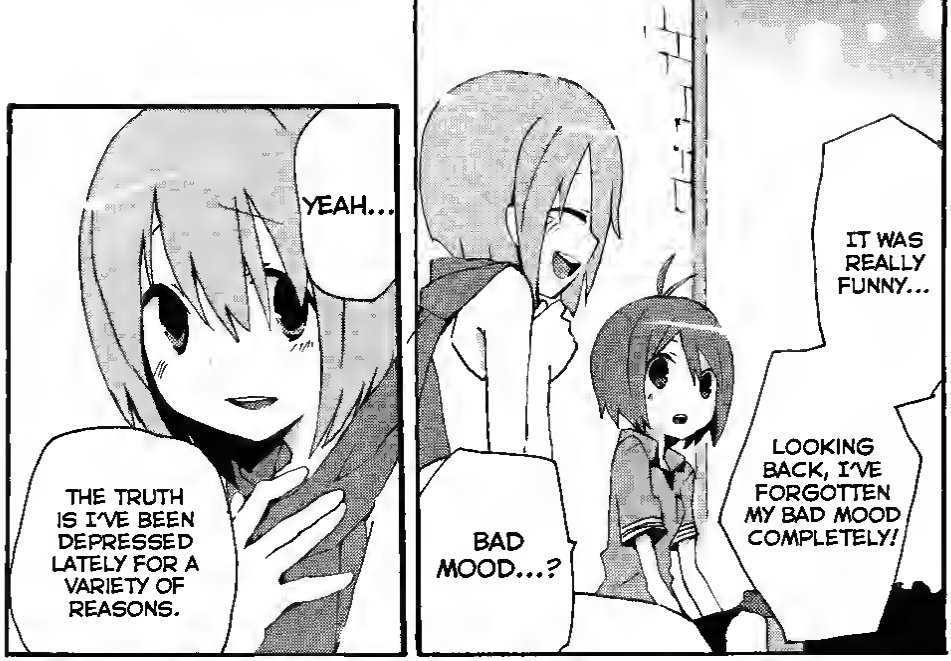
THAT'S NOT THE ROUTE!!
……
I'M TAKING MY OWN ROUTE!!

……

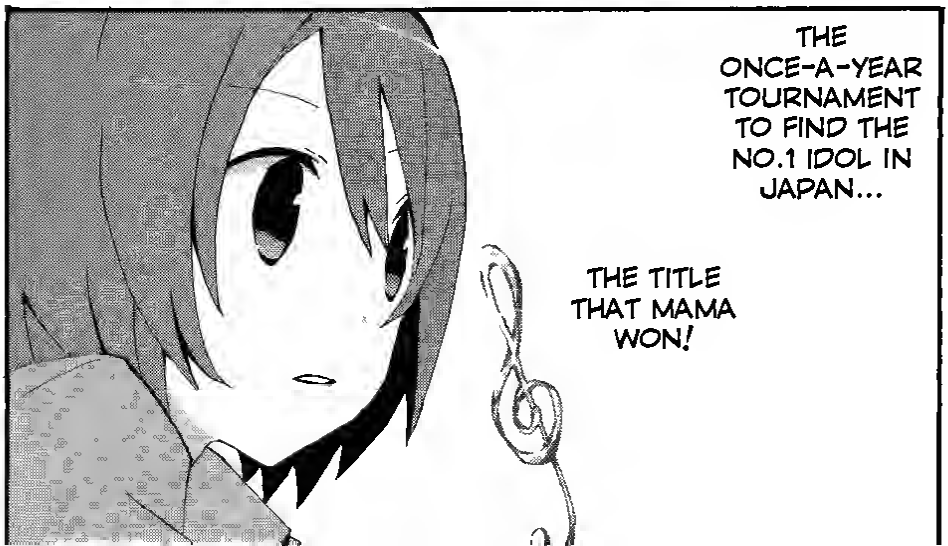

A... ARE YOU OKAY, YUKIHO-SEMPAI?
Y... YEAH...LET MY FEET REST FOR A MINUTE...

UM... I'M SORRY, I THOUGHT SOMETHING LIKE THAT WOULD BE FUN.
I DIDN'T MEAN TO FORCE YOU INTO SOME-THING SCARY...

AI-CHAN AND THE GHOST WERE BOTH CHASING ME.
IT WAS SCARY BUT IT WAS INTERESTING, TOO.


YEAH...
THE TRUTH IS I'VE BEEN DEPRESSED LATELY FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS.
BAD MOOD...?
IT WAS REALLY FUNNY...
LOOKING BACK, I'VE FORGOTTEN MY BAD MOOD COMPLETELY!

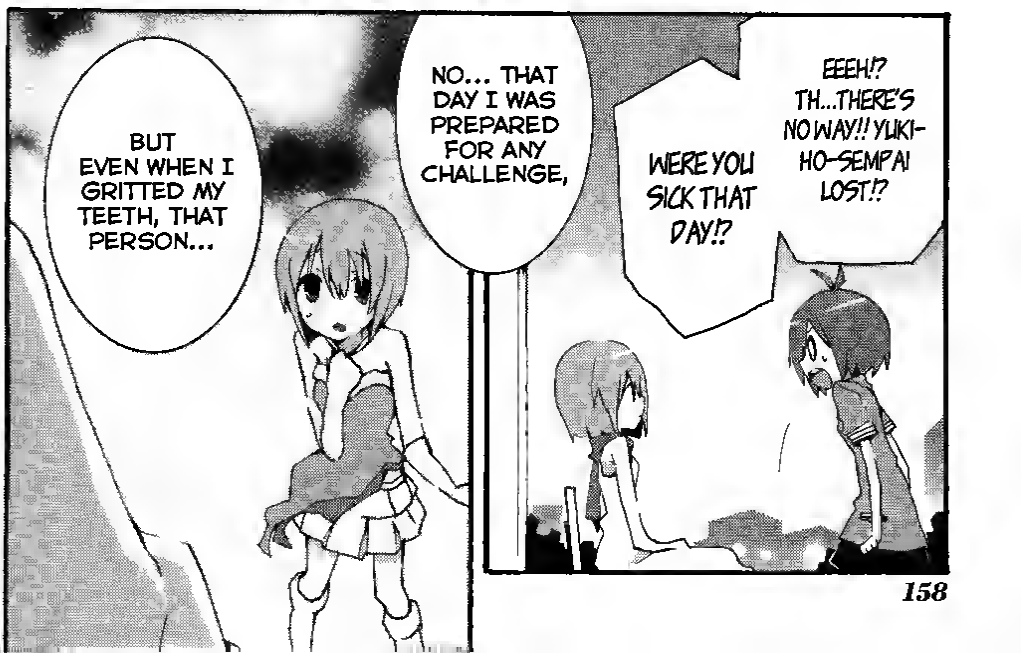
AH! OF COURSE I KNOW ABOUT IT!!
...AI-CHAN, DO YOU KNOW ABOUT IDOL ULTIMATE?


THE ONCE-A-YEAR TOURNAMENT TO FIND THE NO.1 IDOL IN JAPAN...
THE TITLE THAT MAMA WON!

I PARTICIPATED IN THE SPECIAL COMPETITION FOR THE LAST IDOL ULTIMATE.
EEH!!? YOU MEAN YOU WERE SELECTED FOR IT!?
THAT'S AMAZING!!
EVEN THOUGH I STILL DON'T KNOW IF I'LL BE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE OR NOT...
HOW DID IT GO!? SINCE YUKIHO-SEMPAI HAS SUCH PERFECT TALENT YOU MUST HAVE WON, RIGHT!?
HA...
THE TRUTH IS...

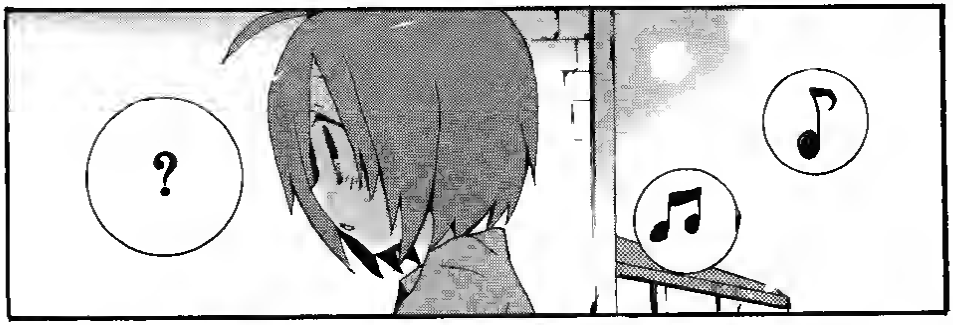
THE ONLY THING I'M PERFECT AT IS LOSING...

HEH...?


BUT EVEN WHEN I GRITTED MY TEETH, THAT PERSON...
NO... THAT DAY I WAS PREPARED FOR ANY CHALLENGE,
WERE YOU SICK THAT DAY!?
EEEH!? TH...THERE'S NO WAY!! YUKI-HO-SEMPAI LOST!?

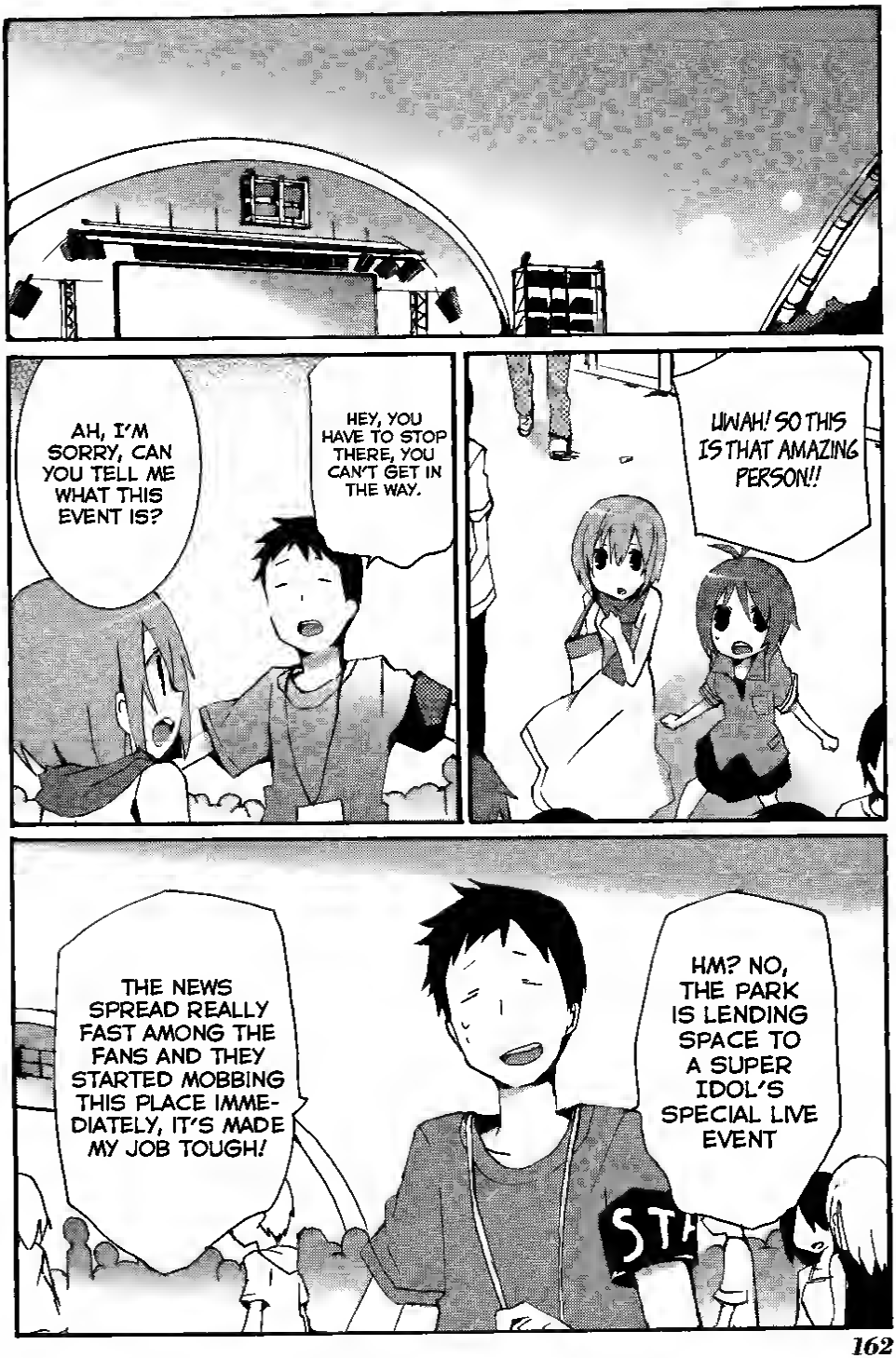
THIS SOUNDS LIKE WHEN RYOU-SAN SAID HE HAD TO DE-CLINE THE AUDITION...
COULD IT BE THE SAME PERSON...?
I'M NOT SURE WHO IT WAS...
NO WAY... THERE WAS AN OPPONENT EVEN MORE POWER-FUL THAN YUKIHO-SEMPAI...!? WHO THE HECK WAS IT!?
BUT THAT PERSON'S AURA ALONE WAS AMAZ-ING...
AH, THAT'S WHAT I WAS GOING TO SAY!
ANYWAY, AFTER PLAYING ALL DAY MY MOOD IS A LOT BETTER!
BUT PLAYING WITH YUKIHO-SEMPAI TODAY WAS A LOT OF FUN.
BECAUSE MY MANAGER QUIT, I WAS FEELING REALLY LONELY.

YEAH!! THANK YOU VERY MUCH!
AND WE CAN PLAY, TOO, IF YOU WANT.
YOU CAN TALK TO ME ANY TIME.


?

IT REALLY IS... IT LOOKS LIKE THERE'S A SHOW START-ING.
WHAT'S THAT? THERE SURE IS A BIG CROWD OVER THERE!

SEMPAI?
THIS VOICE IS...
LET'S GO LOOK FOR A MINUTE, YUKIHO-SEMPAI!
.....!
!!?
THERE'S NO MIS-TAKE
THIS IS THE PERSON FROM THE SPECIAL COM-PETITION!!


AH, I'M SORRY, CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT THIS EVENT IS?
HEY, YOU HAVE TO STOP THERE, YOU CAN'T GET IN THE WAY.
UWAH! SO THIS IS THAT AMAZING PERSON!!
THE NEWS SPREAD REALLY FAST AMONG THE FANS AND THEY STARTED MOBBING THIS PLACE IMMEDIATELY, IT'S MADE MY JOB TOUGH!
HM? NO, THE PARK IS LENDING SPACE TO A SUPER IDOL'S SPECIAL LIVE EVENT

I CAN LET YOU TWO INTO THE FRONT ROW! DO YOU WANT TO SEE?
FOR REAL!? THANK YOU VERY MUCH!
SUPER IDOL...?
OH, NOW I RECOGNIZE YOU TWO; YOU'RE THE IDOLS YUKIHO HAGIWARA-SAN AND AI HIDAKA-SAN, AREN'T YOU!!
MY FACE GOT ME A PASS.
AI-CHAN, HURRY!
...WHO THE HECK IS IT?
YUKIHO-SEMPAI'S UNKNOWN ENEMY,
THE IDOL WHO CAN GATHER SO MANY PEOPLE...

!?

EVERYONE, I'M TRULY GRATEFUL TO YOU FOR COMING TODAY.

BEING ABLE TO STAND ON THIS STAGE IS SO MUCH FUN.
SO LET ME MOVE ON TO THE NEXT SONG!
MY FAVORITE SONG OF ALL!

!!! ALIVE (アライブ)

初出：月刊コミックREX平成22年5月号～8月号